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TAGS: PREL PGOV MARR JA

SUBJECT: USAF CHIEF OF STAFF'S MAY 13 CALL ON DEFENSE
MINISTER HAMADA

Classified By: James P. Zumwalt, Charge d'Affaires, a.i.;
reasons 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) Accompanied by the Charge and U.S. Forces Japan (USFJ) Commander Edward Rice, visiting U.S. Air Force (USAF) Chief of Staff Norton Schwartz called on Defense Minister Yasukazu Hamada on May 12. Gen Schwartz expressed appreciation for all of Japan's contribution to Iraq and Afghanistan. Highlighting productive discussions with Japan Air Staff Chief of Staff Kenichiro Hokazono in an earlier meeting, Schwartz noted he had observed the close collaboration between the Air Self Defense Force (ASDF) and the USAF at Yokota Air Base and was impressed by the evident teamwork between the two forces. Hamada welcomed close cooperation between the USAF and the ASDF, as air power is a critical part of Japan's defense strategy. He pointed out that Prime Minister Aso had directed him to prioritize a strengthened U.S.-Japan Alliance as his "number one" task. His recent meeting in Washington with Secretary Gates has helped in this regard, and he looked forward to meeting the Secretary again at the end of the month during the Shangri-La Conference in Singapore, Hamada said.

¶2. (C) Alluding to the recent DOD decision to halt further production of the F-22 Raptor, Hamada stressed that although it would be difficult to procure the F-22 as Japan's next generation fighter (F-X), he wants to work closely with the United States in getting "the best capability" for the ASDF. Japan is currently undergoing the process of F-X selection, the result of which is critically important for Japan's defense strategy. As both countries go through the transition period with the new U.S. administration, both sides should engage in candid discussions on this, and other important Alliance issues, including the realignment of U.S. forces, Hamada said. Schwartz responded he had outlined earlier with Hokazono the possibilities for Japan's F-X selection, citing Secretary Gates' decision to stop F-22 production. He added that the United States understands the context of how the F-X selection fits with the defense of Japan.

¶3. (C) Gen Schwartz, referring to Japan's process of updating its National Defense Program Guidelines, suggested Hamada should ask Secretary Gates for his outlook on the Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) process during the Shangri-La Conference. While both countries, at the

operational level, should think about physical requirements and logistics, it would be worthwhile to emphasize at a strategic level "enduring themes," including the Alliance. Hamada agreed, adding that the same could be applied to diplomacy, as the Japanese public does not, in general, understand defense issues and that the Alliance should be explained in the context of regional crises, such as provocative actions by North Korea.

¶4. (U) Gen Schwartz has not cleared on this message.
ZUMWALT